

4 November 1972

MEMORANDUM.

SUBJECT: Checklist of Immediate Measures Which Would Improve
the GVN's Position Both Before and After Any
Cease-fire is Signed

1. The following checklist outlines specific measures which, if implemented now, would help to improve the position of the GVN as it jockeys with the Communists during the process of negotiations. It would also improve the GVN's position in any cease-fire, post-hostilities political struggle environment. The list does not include a number of measures which either the GVN or the U.S. is already undertaking, such as (a) maximum efforts to destroy enemy military units, base areas, and rear service areas contiguous to contested populated areas right up to the instant of a cease-fire; (b) maximum air interdiction operations (at least below the 20th Parallel) to slow down Communist efforts to build up stocks of "in-place" supplies and equipment inside South Vietnam; (c) provision by the U.S. of the largest possible amount of military equipment to South Vietnam before a cease-fire takes effect; and (d) the formulation of plans which will provide the best possible unilateral U.S. intelligence verification of the terms of the cease-fire.*

2. Also not included in the following checklist is a key prerequisite to all the measures suggested below -- successfully inducing President Thieu to stop expending energy on fighting his major ally and concentrate all his efforts on (1) improving the GVN's position in the immediate climate and (2) posturing the GVN to translate any negotiated settlement

*We are providing under separate cover the texts of a number of recent intelligence reports, and reports from the American Embassy in Saigon, which describe measures already undertaken by the GVN in preparation for a cease-fire.

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into a de facto Communist surrender. A discussion of factors that might be exploited to get Thieu thinking more positively is contained in a separate, parallel memorandum.

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3. The following measures should be implemented immediately by the GVN:

A. SECURITY MEASURES

- (1) Plans should be made now to improve security throughout the countryside to the maximum extent possible. The GVN already has all its forces -- the ARVN, the RF and PF, and the National Police -- on full alert to prevent the Communists from establishing a presence in additional areas in the few days just before and after the signing of a cease-fire. RF and PF units, and the police, should provide a local guard force for all hamlets and villages. To the extent possible ARVN units should be dispersed to locations from which they can provide quick reaction reinforcements to all hamlets and villages. ARVN regiments and battalions will be of limited value in a cease-fire environment if they remain in their base camps.
- (2) In addition, rather than merely reacting to Communist initiatives, the ARVN should make plans for maximum offensive activity to be carried out in the 72 hours or so before the cease-fire becomes effective. The ARVN should initiate preemptive actions and go on the offensive wherever possible in an effort to roll back the Communists in areas where they are seeking to establish a presence.
- (3) One very important offensive action which ARVN should undertake is to air-assault units by helicopter into positions west of Pleiku or Kontum from which they could block all north-south enemy movements. The objective would be to disrupt a

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potential NVA north-south supply line within South Vietnam. The Communists now control areas in the western part of South Vietnam, along the Lao and Cambodian borders, which could provide them with an in-country supply route running from the DMZ through MR-1 and to the region south of Pleiku in MR-2. By undertaking a fairly modest road-building effort after a cease-fire, they could develop a motorable route wholly within South Vietnam from the DMZ all the way to western MR-3. The proposed ARVN operation would cut Communist-held territory into two parts, and would force the enemy's supply lines, at least near the area of the operation, to remain in Laos or Cambodia where they now are. NVA supply activities in these countries would presumably more clearly contravene the proposed peace agreement than would the same activities inside the Communist-controlled areas of South Vietnam. For maximum effect, and to prevent Communist counteraction, this ARVN operation should be undertaken in the brief period between the signing of the agreement and the time it goes into effect. The exact location of the operation should be the subject of immediate military planning. The region west of Pleiku along Route 19 might provide the most favorable area, but there may be military or other factors which would make a different area more feasible.

- (4) The GVN should establish a reporting system through which a continuous flow of information on implementation of a cease-fire will be funneled to regional headquarters and Saigon from all hamlets and villages. An adaptation of HES reporting channels could be used for this purpose, with all hamlet and village chiefs being required to respond each week to 10 or 12 simple questions on the security and control situations in their areas. A system of independent roving teams (perhaps composed of RD cadres) should also be set up to make on-site inspections in any areas

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where the situation appears to be deteriorating or where the local reporting is suspect.

- (5) All known Viet Cong legal cadres should be immediately arrested and temporarily detained, until the situation following a cease-fire has stabilized. In addition, planning should start now to transfer certain RF units to the National Police Field Forces, to give the police a greater capability to counter subversion in the new period of political struggle.
- (6) President Thieu should use his emergency authority to promulgate an expanded Vietnamese "GI Bill of Rights." Such a bill should include more veterans' benefits and better rehabilitation measures for wounded veterans than those now in effect. The immediate value of the bill would be psychological, raising ARVN morale and discouraging desertion of troops who do not want to be the last to die before a cease-fire. Benefits would be limited to honorably discharged veterans. Over the longer term, the bill could have economic benefits in facilitating transition from a war to a quasi-peace economy, both by easing unemployment problems and by augmenting the supply of trained manpower for economic development.

B. POLITICAL MEASURES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE MEASURES

- (7) The GVN should make a major effort to expand the Chieu Hoi (Rallier) program by all possible means. The government should embark on a large-scale propaganda campaign to induce Viet Cong troops and cadres to rally, using the theme that the Viet Cong have been abandoned by the NVA. Also, all differences between the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong should be exploited.
- (8) The GVN should step up its propaganda emphasis on the surrender program aimed at NVA troops in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The main theme to be

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used against NVA troops should be that they no longer have a cause worth fighting for. With the U.S. out of Vietnam, anti-imperialism is no longer an issue. Surrender will provide a free ride home to North Vietnam.

- (9) The GVN should make an all-out effort to gain the support of nationalist and anti-Communist political groups in South Vietnam who are in opposition to Thieu. Thieu is currently seeking to gain the support of these groups -- but against the agreement itself. Once persuaded, however, that an agreement was the best one that could be obtained, he might also be persuaded that his own future interest would be served by taking concrete steps to improve his relations with the non-Communist opposition groups.*
- (10) The GVN should promote the formation of anti-Communist "coalitions" in legislative bodies at all levels -- National Assembly, Provincial and Village Councils. The GVN and leaders of the various "coalitions" (i.e., political alliances) would then denounce the concept of coalition with the Communists, at whatever level, and maintain that true nationalists already had formed "coalitions" in the legislatures. This tactic would not only furnish an additional propaganda weapon against Communist efforts to upgrade the "councils of national concord and reconciliation" to governmental organisms, but it would also provide a framework to facilitate cooperation among anti-Communist legislators and councillors. Most supporters of the An Quang Buddhists and a few other staunch oppositionists might remain outside the nationalist coalitions, but many independents and moderate oppositionists -- such as followers of Senate Chairman Huyen or of the Progressive Nationalist Movement -- would probably join.

*Several specific suggestions for political action which would contribute to this objective -- and bring into sharper focus the fundamental anti-Communism of nationalist groups opposed to Thieu -- are presented in and Annex to this memorandum.

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- (11) The GVN should organize a program of briefings for middle and upper echelon administrative officials and cadres. These briefings, to be held in Saigon and lasting a full day, should include a "pep talk" by the President as well as more detailed explanations and instructions from ministers and other officials. Bringing provincial officials to Saigon has in the past proved effective not only as a means to impart instructions but also to boost morale and convey a sense of purpose -- of being "on the team." The briefings should be tailored to the needs of the different audiences -- village and provincial officials, RF and PF officers, GVN administrative cadres, Ministry of Information officials, etc. Subjects to be covered would include explanations of the dangers ahead in a post-cease-fire period; the GVN's basic strategy for overcoming them; actions, whether administrative, security or political, to be undertaken; and enemy stratagems to watch for and ways to counter them. If all briefings cannot be held in Saigon, some might be organized at the Military Region level. Again, however, Thieu should personally participate where possible.
- (12) The GVN should accelerate its organization of the Democracy Party. Whatever its deficiencies, the Democracy Party is the only large, unequivocally pro-government party in South Vietnam, and it is completely responsive to the GVN. It can be used as a "parallel hierarchy" to the official governmental structure for a great variety of political purposes: collecting low level political intelligence, dispensing patronage, organizing "spontaneous" demonstrations, getting out and helping to count the vote, etc. While pressing on with recruitment and organization, however, Democracy Party cadres should be urged to avoid alienating other nationalist parties by cannibalizing their cadres.
- (13) The GVN should prepare now to assist the international press and other observers to travel anywhere they desire in South Vietnam to inspect the operation of the cease-fire. Plans should be made for the efficient

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provision of helicopter transport, communications facilities, and accommodations for representatives of the news media. Requests for assistance by such representatives should be welcomed and met with full cooperation by the GVN. The GVN should come up with a proposal that all correspondents should be officially accredited -- either by the GVN, the PRG, or by whatever "neutralist" element finally emerges in the National Council for National Reconciliation and Concord. The GVN should also propose that any accredited correspondent be allowed to visit any part of South Vietnam he desires. Whether or not the Communists accept this, the GVN should lean over backwards to ensure that all correspondents whom it accredits may travel to any part of South Vietnam under GVN control.

- (14) The GVN should publicly announce that it stands ready to accept and assist refugees from areas which fall under Communist control as a result of the cease-fire. The government should embark on an accelerated program to deal with the whole refugee problem, so that those who "vote with their feet" will be adequately cared for and resettled. Where refugees desire to return to hamlets which have been deserted because of the war (and which are not actually occupied by Communist military forces), the GVN should insist that a free local referendum is held in such hamlets to determine whether the population desires to remain under GVN control.

C. ECONOMIC MEASURES

- (15) President Thieu should publicly renew his October 1971 proposal to establish postal exchanges, family visits, and, above all, commercial relations between the two Vietnams. The proposal would undoubtedly be a popular one. Northern refugees who came south after 1954 would welcome an opportunity to communicate with their relatives in the North; southern farmers

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would see possibilities for large and profitable sales of rice (until the 1954 Geneva Accords the North had traditionally imported rice from the South); and Saigon intellectuals would approve as a matter of principle. Both within South Vietnam and abroad, Thieu would appear sure of himself and his position, unburdened by the inferiority complex vis-a-vis North Vietnam which caused Ngo Dinh Diem to reject similar exchanges. By vigorously advocating such proposals, Thieu would gain politically, whatever the North Vietnamese response.

- (16) The GVN should announce now that governmental funds will be available for selected public works projects in villages and hamlets which are under GVN control after a cease-fire is declared. This would provide an inducement for villagers to fight to remain under GVN control in the last few days before a cease-fire took effect. The implementation of such public works projects after a cease-fire would further strengthen the position of the central government in rural areas. (The funds, of course, would probably have to come largely from the U.S.)
- (17) The GVN should work out plans now to emphasize the "free enterprise" aspects of its economy, in contrast to the "controlled economy" of Communist-held areas. New free markets should be opened in villages where possible. GVN planners should set up the methods and channels now to assure that local markets are provided with sufficient supplies not only of necessities such as fertilizer but also of luxuries such as Hondas. Plans should be made now to improve roads between villages and towns where markets are located and the surrounding hamlets. The government should encourage local initiative in building schools, medical dispensaries, etc. In general, the GVN must be able to show that it has better plans to improve the lot of its people than do the Communists.

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- (18) The GVN should announce plans to accelerate the implementation of its land reform program. The announcement should emphasize that the conditions for more rapid land reform will be significantly improved after the fighting ends, and that the government intends to give the program top priority in all areas under GVN control.

4. The following measures should be implemented immediately by the United States:

A. SECURITY MEASURES

- (1) A U.S. military contingency plan -- providing for B-52 backup of ARVN ground units -- should be drawn up, to be implemented in case of major cease-fire violations by the Communists. It would perhaps be helpful if hints that the U.S. was working on a contingency plan such as this were deliberately leaked to the Communists.
- (2) The U.S. should take whatever steps are necessary to assure that the GVN has sufficient radios and communication equipment to provide direct and continuous contact with hamlets which are contested during the period immediately before and after a cease-fire.

B. POLITICAL MEASURES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE MEASURES

- (3) The U.S. should continue and further expand its psychological warfare campaign against both the Viet Cong and the NVA. The line used against the Viet Cong should be that the North Vietnamese are exploiting them. E.g., the North Vietnamese have signed a cease-fire, leaving the Viet Cong holding the bag on terms that are highly unfavorable to them. Against the North Vietnamese the line should be, "The war is over, what are you doing here? Surrender and we will help to send you home, or desert and return to the North yourselves."

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C. ECONOMIC MEASURES

- (5) The U.S. should immediately move to revitalize the Mekong Development Project for Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (plus Thailand).
- (6) The U.S. should make a hard decision as quickly as possible on the extent to which it is willing to spread its future aid among all the countries of Indochina, and the extent to which it wishes to concentrate its aid on projects which will encourage a political resolution favorable to the GVN. The economic progress of the two sides will play a major role in the ensuing political struggle. In this struggle, the economy of the GVN -- though presently distorted by years of war and massive foreign aid devoted to war-related purposes -- is potentially stronger than that of North Vietnam. It should be capable of fairly rapid growth and able to provide its people with substantially improved living standards once the burden of war is removed.
- (7) The U.S. should encourage the sending of international and third country experts to South Vietnam. The war and the controversy surrounding it have discouraged a great many nations and groups from sending economic, technical and even humanitarian assistance to Vietnam. The period following conclusion of a cease-fire will be especially propitious to obtaining the services of both governmental and private technical assistance

teams. Sponsors of such teams could include UN and church affiliated organizations, non-sectarian private groups such as CARE (American) or OXFAM (English) and "third countries." Sharply increased assistance from countries like Japan should be sought, and new programs can probably be obtained from certain countries (e.g., Scandinavian) which in the past have been inhibited by misgivings about contributing to the South Vietnamese war effort. A post-cease-fire South Vietnam should be able to put to good use technical assistance teams in a great variety of fields, notably agricultural and industrial development, medical rehabilitation, and education. The GVN should be advised to set up an adequate staff to oversee and to coordinate all foreign assistance efforts.

ANNEX

Suggestions for Political Action to Help Thieu
Gain Support of Anti-Communist Opposition
Elements within South Vietnam

1. The Central Intelligence Agency has contact with a wide spectrum of politicians, religious leaders and other opinion makers in South Vietnam. Practically all of them are strongly against a coalition government. Most, however, can probably be convinced that the projected agreement does not call for coalition and should therefore be supported. Ironically, it may be easier to obtain support for the agreement from the opposition, notably the An Quang Buddhists, than from more "hawkish" pro-government leaders. When he wishes to do so, however, President Thieu will doubtless be able to bring his supporters, including the pro-government majority in the Lower House, into line behind the agreement.

2. Many politicians loyal to the An Quang Buddhists, by far the most important non-Communist opposition force, are already on record against coalition. While they can probably -- and in fairly short order -- be persuaded that the agreement does not call for coalition and should be supported, they will all see a need to maintain an oppositionist image and any statements they make will have to include criticism of Thieu. Most of this criticism will concentrate on Thieu's failure to unite the non-Communists. If it is not too vituperative, such criticism could actually be salutary in demonstrating that even Thieu's staunchest political adversaries are strongly opposed to coalition.

3. Specifically, CIA assets might be able to bring about the following actions:

A. A communique from Vu Van Mau's (Buddhist) Senate group denouncing coalition, but explaining that the agreement does not provide for coalition. The communique would then call upon Thieu to sign the agreement and to get on with the task of uniting the non-Communists for the political struggle against the Communists.

B. A similar communique from the Lower House opposition People's Society Bloc or, alternatively, a joint communique of the Senate and Lower House opposition groups.

C. Helpful editorials and analytical articles in several newspapers -- moderately pro-government, independent, and opposition.

D. An official An Quang communique welcoming a cease-fire but warning against all attempts to violate it, from whatever side.

4. None of the above proposals would require any action by President Thieu. They could all be encouraged, unilaterally and covertly, by the U.S. Some of them might not in the end prove to be feasible, but most of them probably could be carried out quite rapidly, perhaps with some modification.

5. Another measure, which would require Thieu's authorization, would be for the GVN to allow the establishment of an An Quang-oriented daily newspaper. (No such newspaper now exists, for the very good reason that the GVN has not wished one to exist.) The argument in favor of a Buddhist newspaper at this time is basically that, whereas in the past it might have attacked the GVN more damagingly than the Communists, in present circumstances it would, while definitely not supporting the GVN, depict the Communists as a far greater evil. It would of course take some months actually to set up an An Quang-oriented paper, but Thieu's willingness to authorize it now would have more immediate impact in fostering among Buddhist leaders a less hostile attitude towards the GVN. As for the longer term, the CIA could probably exert a certain amount of influence upon a Buddhist newspaper.

6. Whether we could persuade Thieu to authorize a Buddhist newspaper is problematical. He would have to give An Quang at least a tacit understanding that he would not arbitrarily use his powers under the press decree law to close the paper down. If the publishers, however, who would be lay Buddhists, expressed a willingness to keep their criticism within reasonable bounds, there is at least a fair chance that Thieu could be convinced to give the necessary authorization.

7. A final measure which we could conceivably persuade Thieu to undertake in the interests of better relations with the An Quang would be to attempt to resolve the long-festering Buddhist charter issue. This issue revolves around the question of which Buddhist faction -- An Quang or Quoc Tu -- should be granted a semi-official government charter as the recognized Buddhist leadership of South Vietnam. The Quoc Tu faction, a small minority of South Vietnamese Buddhists, now possesses the charter. The An Quang Buddhists, who are far more numerous, would like to have it. Since the August 1970 Senate elections, the Buddhists have increasingly participated in the system

as a kind of "loyal opposition." Moreover, they are not at present clamoring for immediate resolution of the religious charter issue. Hence the GVN could address itself to the issue without losing face and without appearing to give in to political "demands." On the contrary, a GVN move to resolve the problem now would be seen, at home and abroad, as an indication of self-confidence and magnanimity.

8. The method of resolving the charter issue poses a problem. The GVN would be understandably reluctant simply to take the charter from Quoc Tu and restore it to An Quang. Thieu might, however, use his emergency powers to promulgate a decree regulating religious associations. (Or, it might be wiser to seek legislative approval, which could easily be obtained. This is a matter which could be left up to Thieu and his advisers to decide.) Such a bill, superseding previous legislation, need mention no religion by name. Rather it could set general criteria for defining bona fide religious associations in South Vietnam -- e.g., minimum numbers of adherents, some facilities for educating and training of clergy, etc. The result would be that both An Quang and Quoc Tu -- as well as Catholicism and various Hoa Hao and Cao Dai factions -- would be recognized as legal religious associations.

9. This would still leave Quoc Tu in possession of most of the property which belonged to the United Buddhist Church before it split in two. That problem might be solved by directing the Ministry of Interior to take a religious census. Such a census, if carried out more or less honestly, would find An Quang far more representative of Vietnamese Buddhists than Quoc Tu. An Quang would then seek a court order requiring Quoc Tu to turn over to it certain properties formerly held in common. The courts would doubtless find in favor of An Quang, if that were what Thieu desired.

10. Resolution of the Buddhist charter issue along the above lines would not cause An Quang's followers to support Thieu. It would, however, remove one of their principal (and largely justified) complaints, quite possibly making their opposition less bitter and systematic and making it easier for them to collaborate with the GVN on matters of overriding anti-Communist interest. It would facilitate the task of An Quang leader Thich Tri Quang in maintaining present moderate policies; and it would tend to weaken the position of those leftist elements within An Quang who look upon the PRG as a "lesser evil" than the present GVN. It would also improve the GVN's image abroad.